

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, ABLD, PFOR, ABUD

SUBJECT: MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS DISCUSS PROPOSED MOVE
OF MISSIONS TO RIYADH

1. DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS CALLED MEETING ON JANUARY 7 OF HIS COLLEAGUES TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED MOVE OF ALL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS FROM JIDDA TO RIYADH WHICH OFFICIAL OF MFA HAD CONFIRMED TO HIM WOULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN FIVE YEARS.

2. MEETING RESULTED IN FEW JEWELS OF INFORMATION, BUT DECISION WAS MADE TO FORM COMMITTEE OF TEN (OF WHICH U.S. IS MEMBER) AS COORDINATING BODY TO STUDY MATTER AND TRY TO ELICIT FROM MA ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TIME FRAME ENVISIONED, MATTER REGARDING ALLOCATION OF PROPERTIES, METHODS OF FINANCING REALTY ARRANGEMENTS, ETC. IT WAS REPORTED AT MEETING THAT MFA WAS PLANNING TO SEND QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL MISSIONS WHICH WOULD SEEK INFORMATION REGARDING SIZE OF STAFF, PROPERTY REQUIREMENTS, ETC.

3. MFA IS STILL MENTIONING MOVE TO BE MADE IN FIVE YEARS, BUT AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THAT TIME FRAME MAY BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC SINCE CITY OF RIYADH IS STRUGGLING DESPERATELY TO KEEP AHEAD CURRENT DEVELOPMENT LET ALONE HAVING NEARLY FOUR OR FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE (INCLUDING EMBASSY LOCAL STAFFS) DESCENDING UPON IT ALL AT ONCE. WATER, RESOURCES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POWER CAPABILITIES, AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE WILL HAVE TO BE

IMPROVED UPON GREATLY BEFORE MOVE OF THIS DIMENSION CAN
TAKE PLACE.

4. AS INDICATION OF FUZZINESS, MFA OFFICIAL WHO SPOKE TO
DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS ABOUT THE MOVE HAS INDICATED PRIVATELY
TO US THAT HE HIMSELF DOES NOT EVEN KNOW OF THE SITE RESERVED
IN RIYADH FOR USE OF THE DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE.

5. PRINCE SAUD HAS MENTIONED RECENTLY TO CHARGE' THAT SAG PLANS
TO SELL PROPERTIES TO DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, BUT PAKISTANI
AMBASSADOR REPORTED AT MEETING THAT SAUDIS WOULD MAKE LAND
AVAILABLE ON BASIS OF RECIPROCAL PRACTICES, I.E., IF A
GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE LAND AVAILABLE TO SAG FOR ITS MISSION,
THE SAUDIS WOULD BE INCLINED TO DO THE SAME. SINCE DEPARTMENT
HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO RESPOND TO SAUDIS REQUEST FOR PROPERTIES IN
WASHINGTON AND HOUSTON, PRINCE SAUD MAY CONSIDER IT PROPER THAT
U.S. PAY FOR THE LANDIT WILL REQUIRE IN RIYADH.

6. SINCE MANY PRACTICAL, AS WELL AS TECHNICAL, MATTERS
MUST BE SETTLED BY SAG BEFORE MOVE OF ALL DIPLOMATIC
MISSIONS CAN BE EFFECTED, WE ARE NOT IN POSITION TO
FORWARD ANY SOLID PROPOSALS OR SUGGESTIONS TO WASHINGTON
AT THIS TIME. BUT IT PROBABLY BEHOOVES THE DEPARTMENT,
PARTICULARLY FBO, TO BE GIVING THIS MATTER CONSIDERATION
SINCE THE COST OF MOVING FROM JIDDA AND ESTABLISHING A NEW
CHANCERY, HOUSING AND FACILITIES WILL BE EXCEEDINGLY COSTLY
AND WILL RUN INTO TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

7. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO REPORT ON THIS MATTER AS INFORMATION
COMES TO OUR ATTENTION.

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